



## Best Practices Guide for Healthy Schools

*Because healthy students and  
academic achievement go hand in hand*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Five Best Practices.....	3
Comprehensive Health Education.....	4
Nutrition .....	7
Physical Activity.....	11
School Health Services.....	15
Social, Emotional and Mental Health .....	18
Workplace Wellness .....	22
Myth Busters.....	25

The Colorado Legacy Foundation (CLF) believes that increased student achievement for all Colorado students requires effective leaders in every school, effective educators in every classroom, and healthy and engaging environments that ignite a passion for learning in every student. CLF is an independent nonprofit working in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education and public education stakeholders to accelerate bold improvements in student achievement through innovation, collaboration, and capacity building.



# FIVE BEST PRACTICES

These five best practices are a roadmap to improving student and staff health, nutrition and wellness in every district across Colorado. Healthy schools provide nutritious meals, snacks and beverages, and require that students are physically active every day. They teach students what it means to be healthy. Healthy schools offer access to health care services; provide a school environment that allows students to feel safe and a sense of belonging and engagement; and include workplace wellness programs for all staff. These best practices can help districts develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to healthy schools.

1. **Policies.** School board members adopt and annually review and/or update local wellness policies that foster healthy schools and that are consistent with best practices and legislation identified by state and federal agencies as well as professional education and health organizations.
2. **Staff qualifications.** District leaders ensure that all staff who are focused on nutrition, school health services, health education and physical education are properly credentialed and well-qualified.
3. **Assessment.** The district provides tools for schools to take an inventory of their policies, activities and programs such as the Healthy School Champions Score Card, School Health Index, Wellness School Assessment Tool, Barometers of School Safety climate survey or a similar self-assessment tool. The data collected can be used to drive systemic and programmatic decisions, garner buy-in, and measure efficacy. The local data can also be incorporated into overall school and district improvement plans.

4. **District leadership.** District leaders provide strategic direction and opportunities for enhanced nutrition, physical activity, health education, school health services, workplace wellness and safe and welcoming schools, including social, emotional, and mental health.
5. **Getting it done.** The district promotes parent, community and student engagement and advocacy and partnerships in its schools (including through district wellness committees) to achieve high-quality nutrition, physical activity, health education, school health services, safe and inclusive school climates and workplace wellness.





# COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION



A comprehensive approach to health education includes physical, social-emotional and personal wellness as well as high-risk behavior prevention, which includes injury, alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, violence, and bullying.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure students receive comprehensive health education.

### Adams 12 Five Star School District

The Adams 12 Five Star School District serves almost 43,000 students in its Kindergarten through 12th grade classrooms. An element of its success is the work of administrators, teachers, and staff who are making strides as they focus on the Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Content Standards in order to meet not only state and district requirements, but also the needs of their student population.

The district began aligning its curricula to the standards in 2010. They created a “Whole Standards Committee” made up of middle and high school representatives who were tasked with updating and improving assessments to meet standards, and they reviewed alignment with rubrics. Their desired outcome was to find opportunities to create 21st century learners in the district—those who develop skills in critical thinking, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction, and invention.

Adams 12 also invests in its staff through professional development around the standards. Many secondary and high school teachers have attended trainings and are working through unit planning to accomplish their comprehensive health targets.

*“The Comprehensive Health Standards give students the ability to be life-long learners, teaching them to take charge of their lives and the many decisions they will make along the way and giving them hope that it isn’t too late to change negative behaviors into positive ones,” shared a teacher at Mountain Range High school. “There is always hope. Each student has hopes and dreams, and it is up to us to give them the knowledge and skills it will take to get them there.”*



### Archuleta School District

Located near the Colorado’s southern border, the rural Archuleta School District enrolls just over 1350 students, 58% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch. Concerned about the health and wellness of both the students and the community, the members of the district’s Health and Wellness committee—clergy, business people, parents, teachers, and students—partnered with the school district to improve health and wellness outcomes for everyone. The school district distributed the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey and found that substance abuse and sexual health issues rose to the top of students’ needs.

Knowing that new Comprehensive Health Standards were on the horizon, the community-district collaborative started examining new curricula. They valued curricula that were evidence-based, engaging, skills-oriented, and involve parents, and using the HECAT to analyze available curricula, this community was able to come to consensus on “The Great Body Shop” for K-8 students and “Safer Choices” for high school students, which begins contraceptive education in 7th grade. The district also ensured that all elementary students received 30 minutes of health education a week as a specials rotation; middle school students received one year

of PE/Health, and high school students were required to take one semester in 9th grade. This allowed every student, K-9, to receive all standards. Health and Prevention Specialists teach health at the elementary school, while PE and science teachers are health teachers at the middle school, and in the high school, PE teachers are trained to offer the health course.

Students learned skills to cope with stress, how to say no to drugs, alcohol, and violence, strategies to advocate for their own health, respectful inclusion of the LGBTQ community, and they shared what they learned with their parents and the community. In the face of tremendous cultural and economic changes, the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey showed that health risk indicators have stayed steady or declined over the years.

*"I am pleased with our district's health curriculum. Based on sound principles and best practices in health education, I am confident our students are receiving the educational tools they need to make sound, life-changing decisions,"* shared David Hamilton, High School Principal.

Explained Julie Greenly, Elementary School Health Teacher, *"Young children today are faced with difficult decisions regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, as well as involvement in bullying, unwanted physical contact, or other types of violence. Health education emphasizes that everyone has the right to personal privacy and safety, teaching students skills to assertively advocate for themselves in situations that are unsafe or uncomfortable."*

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

- 4 Review the district's current health education program. What areas of the program are strong? Deficient?
- 4 Develop a plan for updating and strengthening the health education program district-wide. Be sure to reach out to the staff, students, parents and community for input.
- 4 Make health education a priority for all grade levels.
- 4 Integrate health education where possible within core curricula.
- 4 Work with your school schedule at the elementary level, and include a specific timeframe for health instruction during the day.
- 4 Offer health education courses in middle and high school that ensure students can demonstrate mastery of skills and concepts articulated in Colorado's standards.

### School Board Members

- 4 Engage the community to gain deeper insights into its priorities regarding health education, and include an analysis of any community health behavior data.
- 4 Develop a board policy to provide an equitable, safe, healthy, positive learning environment district-wide that teaches and practices lifelong wellness skills for the entire school community — students, teachers and administrators. Use the standards as a common, consistent, and age appropriate framework.
- 4 Build awareness among constituents about what health education is and why it's relevant to today's students.

### How does your district measure up?



- q Our sequential, mastery-based, health education curriculum is consistent with the new Comprehensive Health Education and updated Physical Education State Standards.
- q The Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards recommends that students in Pre-K to grade 2 receive a minimum of 40 hours and students in grades 3 to 12 receive a minimum of 80 hours of instruction in health education per academic year.
- q All health education units or modules are research-based or consistent with recognized best practices criteria, such as the Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum.
- q Our health education staff is well-trained, utilizes experiential instructional strategies, and receives ongoing, current professional development.
- q Our comprehensive health education curriculum is compliant with Colorado legislation, The Comprehensive Health Education Act of 1990 and The Healthy Youth Act, HB07-1292, and is science-based, culturally relevant and sensitive, medically accurate, and fosters a positive self-concept.

## Students

- 4 Create health standards tools and lessons relevant to your school's and peer's needs.
- 4 Design campaigns to create awareness, advocate for, and advertise health and how to be healthy.
- 4 Plan and run assemblies for K-8 students.
- 4 Use portfolios, presentations, and projects that you create in health education, science or family and consumer sciences classes to promote healthy messages throughout the entire school.
- 4 Find and promote "Health Buddies" to keep each other accountable.
- 4 Create morning announcements that are relevant to health (e.g. health tips and wellness videos).
- 4 Present information and presentations on the Comprehensive Health Content Standards.
- 4 Talk to your school leaders about having an anti-bullying week or events throughout the year.
- 4 Make connections between physical, social and emotional health (e.g. posters and presentations).
- 4 Promote and model being healthy; promote the benefits with posters of the youth leaders in your school (e.g. similar to "Got Milk?" posters).

## Parents

- 4 Advocate for Pre-K–2nd grade students to receive a minimum of 40 hours and students in grades 3 to 12 to receive a minimum of 80 hours of health instruction annually.
- 4 Develop partnerships with community organizations and health specialists who can complement the district's approach to health education with additional resources, programs and professional development.
- 4 Support student leadership/voice in health-related activities.

## Community Members

- 4 Become a leader or a supporter of health education in your school district and community.
- 4 Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about health education. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- 4 Develop partnerships with districts and schools to provide additional resources, programs and professional development focused on health education.

# RESOURCES

There's a wealth of resources available to get you started. Among the most relevant to health education:

### [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Find research on the link between healthy students and positive academic outcomes.

### [Colorado Department of Education — Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Standards](#)

See state content standards that provide intentional opportunities to integrate and differentiate health concepts and skills. Also, see the CDE Sample Units and Sample Assessments that are being created in partnership with health teachers throughout the state.

### [Colorado Legacy Foundation](#)

Access Comprehensive Health & PE Standards promotional and instructional resources to get started in using the standards to promote life-long healthy behaviors in all students.

### [RMC Health](#)

Get Comprehensive School Health Education programs and training for educators, parents and others committed to improving health. Resources include curricula and training, events, and standards and assessments.

### [Colorado Youth Matter](#)

Get help selecting and implementing an evidence-based program.

### [EdNews Parent Colorado](#)

Access news, tip sheets and background information on the most talked about issues affecting students, including healthy schools.







Poor diet is one of the leading causes of obesity; inadequate physical activity is the other. Obese children are at higher risk for medical conditions such as asthma and diabetes. They tend to have higher rates of depression, low self-esteem and absenteeism. All of these factors make it harder to pay attention in class and succeed in school.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure students receive nutritious meals.

### Adams 14 School District

*"I wouldn't know what to do if we didn't have breakfast for students,"* shared a teacher from Adams 14 School District, located in Commerce City, just north of Denver. With over 80% of its student population on free and reduced lunch, the district realized that access to a healthy meal at the start of the day was critically important to its students' ability to simply function at school.

It was a challenge with over 7,500 mouths to feed. But the district wasn't daunted. Before Adams 14 began the Universal Breakfast in the Classroom program, just 25% of students participated in school breakfast. Now that breakfast is out of the cafeteria, and in the classroom, 88% are choosing breakfast. "Breakfast in the Classroom" has not only been good for the Adams 14 students, it has also added revenue to the school's coffers and supported a school lunch transformation too. Now, over 85% of school lunches are made from fresh whole ingredients, supported in part, by the success of the breakfast program.

"Breakfast in the Classroom" is a collaborative effort between teachers, custodial staff, administration, parents, and students. Students arrive early before school starts for the day, roll coolers with breakfast items to classrooms, and leave them at the doors. In return for their service, students raise money for their school clubs. This helps out nutrition services and everyone benefits.



The school is seeing a "ripple effect" from offering a healthy meal at the start of the day. Before implementing the district-wide breakfast program, many school nurses began their day facing lines of students who had "tummy aches" and were feeling ill. After one week of the breakfast program, lines were virtually gone, and nurses and teachers were able to remove the breakfast products they stored in their desks to feed hungry students.

*"Fewer kids are sick, fewer are needing diabetes checks, discipline issues are down, behavior is better; and the kids are quieter and calmer at lunch,"* stated one principal. Principal support of the program was critically important to ensure the success of the program. *"It was a challenge,"* but one that Adams 14 Nutrition Services Director, says, *"Was the right thing to do for our kids; we are feeding the next generation."* No matter the free and reduced lunch percentage of a school, Adams 14 Nutrition Services Director shared that any program can be successful, *"It is the work that you put into it."* Students and staff are "customers," and like any business, there is a need to market, advertise and recognize supply and demand.

The district was also able to start a catering program for healthy snacks, classroom birthday parties and

celebrations and staff meetings. Adams 14 has a catering menu that includes healthy and low cost options, such as a fruit tray for \$7, which is available to any parent or staff member, and they are taking advantage of it. From the revenue of the catering program, the food services department has been able to hire a district wellness coordinator and has revamped their high school cafeteria so that it is a hip and welcoming school spot.

### Silverton School District

The Silverton School District, located in southwest Colorado in the heart of the San Juan Mountains, consists of one historic school and 60 students enrolled K-12, 69% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch. But until recently, the Silverton School District was the only district in Colorado that could not offer a hot breakfast or lunch program because the school lacked a kitchen and was told a small community cannot self-sustain a school meal program. Committed to healthy kids and academic achievement, the district began a brown bag lunch program, and students either went home for lunch or brought their own. However, staff were horrified at what the students brought into the school for “lunch.” And then, in the midst of disaster, when the school’s central heating went out for two years, unexpected opportunity appeared. The District received a BEST grant and as part of the school renovation, was able to build a kitchen and cafeteria.

The school kept the momentum going; they were awarded a \$20,000 grant from the Colorado Legacy Foundation and through observations of other local school districts and aid from the town’s policy writer and the Colorado Department of Education’s Office of Nutrition, Silverton developed menus, policies and procedures that meet the new USDA Meal Patterns to offer hot lunches to all students, Pre-K-12, and staff. Silverton leaders hired one of their school board members as the chef and started serving meals a few months later. Partnering with a local grocery store, they make 100% of their meals from scratch, a salad bar is offered daily, all meals meet the standards for healthy lunches, and all meals are served for free to students.

So far, participation is high. The school serves approximately 25 breakfasts and 50 lunches each day, which reaches a little over 75% of the student population in the first few months. Students created norms for behavior in the cafeteria, and they provide input into the meal selections. The school also serves healthy snacks to the students who attend homework club after school, and teachers no longer have to store food in their classrooms for hungry students. The overall district schedule was also changed to allow a full 30 minutes for each lunch period and the school partnered with the county to offer a special lunch period, where it opens its doors, in a true community model, for seniors from the community to eat school lunch, many for the first time.

There were many bumps in the road, but Silverton knew that although this was hard work, it was the right work. Teachers report fewer tardies and absences, and because students are fed nutritious food, they are engaged and focused in class. Furthermore, the Silverton Board of Education approved a portion of general funds to sustain the meal program, making this a real success story.

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

- 4 Establish a wellness and nutrition committee of parents, community members, staff and students to assist the district with policies and practices.
- 4 Promote, celebrate and publicize the healthy changes made in your school meal program.
- 4 Ensure classroom rewards, vending machines, a la carte lines, fundraisers and stores in every school only provide healthy options. Jettison sugary snacks and drinks.
- 4 Work with vending contacts to price unhealthy items at a higher rate than healthy items.
- 4 Connect schools to experts and resources for developing tasty, nutritious foods.
- 4 Send nutrition information home to parents who pack their children’s snacks and lunches. Explain the elements of a healthy snack and lunch.

### School Board Members

- 4 Engage the community to gain deeper insights into its values about good nutrition and student achievement.
- 4 Develop a board policy that directs the district to provide healthy and nutritious food on school grounds and nutrition education for all students, as outlined in federal legislation.
- 4 Make time in your schedule to sit down and enjoy a school lunch or breakfast with one of the schools in your district.
- 4 Build awareness among constituents about the relevance of nutrition to student achievement.
- 4 Develop collaborative partnerships with community organizations, including the medical community, social services agencies and local nonprofits interested in nutrition.

### Students

- 4 Create and plan hands-on activities and challenges for the school, e.g., FAQs boxes with nutrition questions, live examples (How Much Sugar is in Your Beverage?), promotional posters (e.g. MyPlate), etc.



## NUTRITION, continued

- 4 Write letters to engage community members to help inform school leaders, board members and parents, including doctors, dietitians, the local health department, etc.
- 4 Help create and enhance a nice ambiance in your cafeteria. Work with food services on food placement, lunchroom set up, lighting, décor, etc.
- 4 Record what you eat for a week (include your family members and teachers too), and see how you compare to the healthy dietary guidelines.
- 4 Research the truth about fast foods, and create posters to inform your friends (you can include this in morning announcements to promote your peers to eat at school instead of going off campus).
- 4 Research the ingredients of common foods, and educate your peers and teachers (e.g., what is that chemical?).
- 4 Step up as a leader in your school, and talk to adults about providing good nutrition and advocating for it.
- 4 Create or join the wellness & nutrition committee in your school/district.
- 4 Talk to your teachers about incorporating nutrition education and awareness in the classroom and what you think that should look like.

## Parents

- 4 Partner with community organizations that can provide programming, which teaches good nutrition and healthy eating — both during school hours and in after-school programs. For example, build school gardens that can be both educational and nutritious.
- 4 Get to know your district's food service program and make an effort to include healthy snacks and refreshments at district and school meetings, in the classroom, and at events and celebrations.
- 4 Encourage children to participate in free school breakfasts.
- 4 Serve on a wellness and nutrition committee of parents, community members and staff to assist the district with policies and practices.
- 4 Get involved and attend health fairs, after-school cooking classes, etc.

## How does your district measure up?



- q District-wide, our schools use at least three of the following strategies to promote healthy eating:
  - Limit the amount of processed foods offered to students.
  - Price nutritious food and beverages at lower costs, and increase prices for less nutritious foods and drinks.
  - Eliminate unhealthy a la carte food offerings in the school cafeteria.
  - Collect and use suggestions from students, families and school staff about nutritious, culturally relevant food preferences and strategies to promote healthy eating.
  - Provide information about nutrition and the caloric content of foods available.
  - Conduct taste tests to determine food preferences for nutritious items.
  - Provide opportunities for students to visit the cafeteria to learn about food safety, food preparation or other nutrition-related topics.
  - Provide fresh fruits and vegetables in the meal program using a school or community garden, initiating a farm to school program and/or offering a daily salad bar with school meals.
  - Offer universal breakfast in all schools.
- q All schools in our district meet the new USDA Guidelines.
- q Our nutrition staff is well-trained and is current on best practices in the field.
- q All schools in our district meet the HealthierUS School Challenge criteria for cafeteria meals, food vending machine items, school store snacks and school celebrations.
- q Beverages offered at schools in our district meet or exceed Colorado Healthy Beverages Policy Standards.
- q We offer nutrition education in at least half of the grade levels in every school in our district that meets the new Colorado Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Standards.
  - Our approach to nutrition education is fun, interactive and integrated into the curriculum.
  - It encourages children to eat a variety of foods, including those that are lower in fat and are calcium-rich, as well as more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, all while paying attention to portioning.
- q We provide opportunities to share nutrition education with families such as: newsletters, cooking classes, health fairs, etc.
- q Only non-food or healthy food rewards are given in the classroom.
- q Only non-food or healthy food items are used in celebrations, birthday parties, staff meetings, etc.

## Community Members

- 4 Become a leader or a supporter of good nutrition and nutrition education in your school district.
- 4 Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to increase access to well-balanced meals for students, staff and the community. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- 4 Partner with districts and schools to provide programming that teaches good nutrition and healthy eating — both during school hours and in after-school programs.
- 4 Serve on a wellness and nutrition committee of parents, community members and staff to assist the district with policies and practices.

## RESOURCES

### [Action for Healthy Kids](#)

Find resources to engage parents and community members, including tip sheets on How to Create a Healthier School Food Culture.

### [Alternatives for Food Rewards](#)

Discover healthy alternatives to food rewards for K-12 classrooms.

### [American Association of School Administrators](#)

Discover a wealth of resources for district administrators focused on childhood obesity and healthy school environments, including a checklist for wellness and informative newsletters featuring school districts that are making positive program and policy changes in healthy eating and active living.

### [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

CDC synthesized research and best practices related to promoting healthy eating and physical activity in schools, culminating in

nine guidelines: the School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

### [Center for Science in the Public Interest](#)

Find out about effective practices and policies to improve school foods and beverages.

### [Children's Health Foundation](#)

Learn how five Colorado middle schools removed unhealthy a la carte options for more healthy options and the impact of this decision on their school budgets.

### [Colorado Department of Education Team Nutrition](#)

Find information on the new USDA Meal Patterns and what changes this constitutes. Find brochures to promote healthy food to parents (English and Spanish), administrators and teachers.

### [EdNews Parent Colorado](#)

Access news, tip sheets and background information on the most talked about issues affecting students, including healthy schools.

### [Fuel up to Play 60](#)

Find tons of resources and tools for nutrition education and integrating nutrition into the school environment.

### [Greeley School District Meal Program](#)

Learn how District 6 was able to hire a full-time wellness coordinator with the additional revenue earned from their scratch-cooking meal program. This case study outlines three easy steps to replicate Greeley's sustainable nutrition program.

### [Leadership for Healthy Communities Action Strategies Tool Kit](#)

Use the strategies in this comprehensive tool kit to develop policies for high-quality nutrition in schools.

### [Virtual Lunch Box](#)

Visit the virtual lunch box online for strategies school and district leaders can use to create healthier meals for students and staff that are grown locally and prepared from scratch.



Adams City High School's new cafeteria.



More than one in ten Colorado children is obese. Lack of physical activity is a leading cause of obesity; a poor diet is another. Obese children are at a higher risk for asthma and diabetes as well as depression and low self-esteem. Lack of energy, poor self-image and health complications make it a lot harder to concentrate in school and can lead to behavior issues. Physical activity can stimulate the mind and enhance brain function.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure students are physically active.

### La Veta School District

La Veta school district is located in southern Colorado just off of US 160 at the base of the spectacular Spanish Peaks. This rural district has an elementary school, a junior-senior high school, and a total of approximately 230 students. The school started its physical activity “renovation” a few years ago as a forward thinking teacher asked to use yoga balls instead of traditional classroom chairs. The students sat on the yoga balls, and more ideas started rolling from there.

“Play Spaces” are integrated into the school day in all classrooms, during recess and lunch breaks. In addition, physical education classes for 30 minutes every day, or every other day depending on the class level, round out the physical activity opportunities that are plentiful. Timing of lunch recess is part of the plan; older students have recess before lunch, which results in students eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more milk, wasting less food, and showing better behavior. The district understands that healthy staff is also important to overall school wellness and offers a staff wellness program with Zumba and group exercise classes. The Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center, a local hospital, offers health screenings for staff once a



year, one of several successful community collaborations in the district. The district is working with The Colorado Health Foundation on a playground renovation and a local Park & Recreation District to obtain additional funding for the playground improvements.

There are opportunities for physical activity outside of the school day as well. The 21st Century After School Program for 6th to 12th grade students includes Zumba, rock climbing, volleyball conditioning and more. Because the district participates in youth sports programs in neighboring communities and recreation districts, the school facilities are used for games and practices. With funding from the Colorado Legacy Foundation, the district was able to introduce the SPARK curriculum that is designed to create, implement, and evaluate programs that promote lifelong wellness. La Veta was also able to hire a staff position to facilitate activity during lunch recesses and to train instructional staff on the techniques and attributes of “Brain Gym” and facilitating movement throughout the school day in all classrooms.

Overall, the La Veta School District is on a roll, and excited that it is seeing more active kids and staff, better behavior, and increased attendance.



### Red Hawk Elementary

As a new public school in the St. Vrain Valley School District outside of Denver, Red Hawk built physical activity into the plan from day one. This elementary school is located in Erie, Colorado, about halfway between Broomfield and Longmont. The school of approximately 564 students is committed to helping each and every one to reach his/her academic potential and become a contributing member of the school community. While “red” is in its name, this very “green” school was recently built with an eye to energy efficiency, sustainability, and health.

Using a rotating daily “movement calendar,” students gain 40 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on a daily basis, in addition to scheduled PE class and recess. According to principal Cyrus Weinberger, “[This is a systematic program that’s built into the schedule—it’s built in to the culture of the school so that at critical moments throughout the day, we interject rigorous physical activity right before our hardest academic activities.](#)”

Mr. Weinberger uses free physical activity resources and asks for parent volunteers. “[This can be replicated in any school,](#)” he states.

The in-class movement sessions take place in 20-minute blocks, once in the morning, and once in the afternoon immediately before the most challenging academic subjects, like math and science. Other physical activities include the “Red Hawk Walk,” where students power-walk along designated routes throughout the building, as well as in-class cardio and dance breaks. Each Friday, the week ends with “All-School Movement,” as all 564 students, faculty and staff head outside to participate in a coordinated fitness routine set to popular music. The school was nationally recognized by the Active School Acceleration Project (ASAP) Innovation Competition where it was awarded \$100,000 for its movement program. So why would Red Hawk work so hard at integrating physical activity into the school schedule? Researchers such as Dr. John Ratey have shown that physical fitness is intricately tied to academic success. At Red Hawk, Mr. Weinberger states that he and his staff have noticed more focused and engaged students and less behavioral issues, “[At the cost of giving up some time, the quality of learning and the students’ ability to focus and retain information is dramatic.](#)”

A recent survey showed that 95% of students in grades three to five look forward to coming to and have fun at school, while 98% of parents feel welcomed and 99% are satisfied with their child’s education. (Note—survey data is based on the 160 families that responded). Red Hawk Elementary is clearly sharing a message about the connection between academic achievement, physical activity, health and wellness. They understand that working collaboratively with school administration, parents, and staff successfully promotes movement of both bodies and minds.

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

- 4 Use the Colorado Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Standards to create a comprehensive school physical activity program that integrates physical activity throughout every school day—from creative classroom approaches for getting students moving during reading and math to an annual district-wide bike- or walk-to-school day event.
- 4 Encourage physical education teachers to work with other teachers to integrate the core curriculum into their classes. For example, physical education teachers can ask students to use math skills by measuring their heart rates and graphing the data.
- 4 Provide resources for core teachers to integrate physical activity into their everyday classroom such as: brain breaks, morning warm-ups, and scheduled school-wide physical activity breaks.
- 4 Explore creative ways to offer physical activities that better reflect what’s new, current and of interest to students. Involve your community.
- 4 Provide opportunities for a structured recess program to ensure all students are being active on the playground.

### School Board Members

- 4 Engage the community to gain deeper insights into its values about the relationship between physical activity and student learning.
- 4 Develop a board policy to provide more opportunities for students to engage in physical activities that further enhance student learning and wellness.
- 4 Build awareness among constituents about the relevance of physical activity to student achievement.

### Students

- 4 Voice your opinion, volunteer and offer to work with peers and teachers to plan and create and lead 1-2 minute physical activity breaks in the classroom every day in every class.
- 4 Help teachers to understand why physical activity breaks are important. Have teachers list breaks in their class agenda on the board.
- 4 Ask for physical activity, and advocate for teachers to treat every day like “assessment week.”
- 4 Create physical activity challenges for class competitions during spirit weeks.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, continued

- 4 Promote community awareness, and create social media groups to organize physical activity events in your community.
- 4 Positively reach out to all students, especially those whom may not be involved in athletics.
- 4 Set clear expectations, and always be welcoming and never condescending toward the performance of others.
- 4 Start and/or join physical activity opportunities before, during and after school.
- 4 Structure time that students stand around, and start a game, activity, walking club, etc.

## Parents

- 4 Serve as role models to children by living active, healthy lives. Engage in physical activities with your child at least three times a week.
- 4 Advocate at school board meetings for increasing physical activity in school curriculum. Underscore the link to student achievement.
- 4 Seek out community organizations that can provide after-school activities such as weight-lifting, aerobics, Taekwondo, yoga and sports.

## Community Members

- 4 Become a leader or a supporter of increased physical activity in your school district.
- 4 Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to increase access to physical activity for students, staff and the community. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- 4 Develop partnerships with your district to provide additional resources, programs and events focused on physical activities. Promote after-school activities such as sports or exercise classes and safe routes to school.

## How does your district measure up?



- q We meet the HB11-1069 requirements by offering 150 minutes of physical activity weekly or 30 minutes of physical activity a day for all elementary students.

School Schedule	Minimum minute requirement for full day students	Minimum minute requirements for half day students
Schools that meet 5 days per week	600 minutes per month (an average of 30 minutes per day)	300 minutes per month (an average of 15 minutes per day)
Schools that meet fewer than 5 days per week	30 minutes per day	15 minutes per day

- q We avoid substitutions for physical education such as marching band or ROTC.
- q We offer structured recess.

- q Our physical education teachers are licensed and have received professional development in their field during the past two years.
- q We offer 150 minutes of physical education weekly or 30 minutes a day at the elementary school level, and 225 minutes weekly or 45 minutes a day at the middle school and high school levels. Our physical education curriculum is sequential and consistent with the Colorado Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Content Standards.
- q We offer our elementary students recess before lunch.
- q We avoid taking recess away as punishment.
- q We partner with organizations that offer after-school programs promoting physical activity.
- q We offer professional development and provide resources to our staff to be able to integrate physical activity breaks into the daily K-12 classroom. View our webinar on Move More, Learn More: Physical Activity at the Secondary Level.

## RESOURCES

### [Alliance for a Healthier Generation—Healthy Schools](#)

Find resources that enable schools to increase student opportunities to exercise and eat healthier foods. This website also provides resources for teachers and staff to become healthy role models.

### [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

Find research on the link between healthy students and positive academic outcomes.

### [Colorado Action for Healthy Kids—Parents are the Power! Tool Kit \(English and Spanish\)](#)

Check out this tool kit that parents can use to create healthier environments for their children in Colorado schools.

### [Colorado Department of Education—Comprehensive Health Education and Physical Education Standards](#)

See state content standards that provide intentional opportunities to integrate and differentiate physical education concepts and skills.

### [Fuel Up to Play 60](#)

Find tons of resources for physical activity breaks, games and ideas.

### [Let's Move!](#)

Learn more about the Let's Move! campaign started by First Lady Michelle Obama. Its goal is to solve the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation so that children born today will reach adulthood at a healthy weight.

### [LiveWell Colorado](#)

Find resources on healthy eating and active living, including a resource on not taking recess away as punishment.

### [Peaceful Playgrounds 60 Alternatives to Withholding Recess](#)

Check out this resource for alternatives to using recess as punishment.

### [Take a Break! Teacher Toolbox for Physical Activity at the Secondary Level](#)

Take a Break by adding 1-5 minutes physical activity breaks for students in the 6th through 12th grades. This resource has over 100 secondary appropriate and easy to integrate activities, including a lesson plan template for your students to create their own activities.

### [SPARK](#)

Visit this website for information on how to create and evaluate programs that promote physical activity and lifelong wellness for students and staff.







School health services — whether led by a nurse or approached as a school-based health center — help students assess their health, manage chronic illness, administer medication and provide health counseling. The payoff can be huge in terms of academic achievement. Better management of chronic illness, for example, increases attendance. And improved attendance increases the chances of academic success.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure students have access to school health services.

### [PLACE Bridge Academy](#)

This is a remarkable school overcoming some remarkable hurdles. Located in Denver Public Schools, PLACE Bridge Academy is a magnet school for refugees, enrolling over 1,000 students who speak 52 different languages and come from over 60 different countries. The average income of students' families is \$20,000, and 96% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Some students spend two hours a day on a bus to get to the school. The Principal, Brenda Kazin, recognized the educational challenges the students faced, and she knew that for them to grow academically, their physical needs must be met first.

Partnering with Denver Health, The Denver Health Foundation, and Community Health Services, the school took advantage of federal, state, and grant funding to provide students with a school based health center, staffed with either a physical assistant or nurse practitioner who provide primary care for the students at PLACE Bridge. Students who are in the 6th grade or above can visit the center without a parent, so students can stay in school and parents do not need to leave work. Students can receive vaccinations, vision and hearing screenings, well visits, and preventative medical and preventative dental care.



The service is at no cost to the parent or child, and private insurance is not necessary. The center does, however, bill insurance companies and Medicaid, when possible.

The health efforts of this school also reach far beyond their school based health center and into the school's systems, culture and community. Ms. Kazin uses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and offers staff wellness, culturally responsive games during recess, and a safe space where her students learn skills to self-monitor behavior and handle conflict. They also offer a dinner service, a community garden, and a parent welcome center that offers nutrition education and classes in cooking, English and business.

PLACE Bridge leaders have used general school funds to hire their own wellness facilitator to coordinate this work and collect data on nursing visits, student discipline issues and parent/student perception surveys. They analyzed the data, identified the needs of their students and integrated a health and wellness related major improvement strategy into their school's Unified Improvement Plan.

The school now boasts a 95% attendance rate and a declining mobility rate. As Ms. Kazin states, "[It's a moral imperative. Let us be the stability in the lives of our students.](#)" Clearly, it's a happy, healthy PLACE to be.

### Montrose and Olathe Schools

Montrose County, located in Southwest Colorado, believes that public education is an equalizing opportunity and strives to ensure that its graduates are prepared for the workplace or post secondary education. The school district serving this agricultural hub of the western slope is home to 40,000 people and covers 2,200 square miles. The district faces unique challenges with 50% of its 6100 students participating in the federal free and reduced lunch program, and 90% that are Medicaid eligible.

School Based Health Centers (SBHC) have shown a great deal of promise in improving health outcomes for students, decreasing Medicaid costs and even potentially raising academic outcomes for low-income students. Montrose County School District's first SBHC opened its doors in 2007 at Northside Elementary School. The center is part of a broader strategy to address the needs of the community and is staffed with a full time nurse practitioner, mental health therapist, family outreach coordinator and receptionist.

The SBHC's nurse practitioner is also seen as a resource to the school and provides after school physical activity and health education classes, week long Healthy Kids Camps, and contraceptive and health education classes at the high school.

The district is using technology to streamline SBHC operations and data collection. For example, an Electronic Medical Referral system tracks referrals from many locations in the county, replacing an older paper-based system and helping to ensure follow up care. Thanks to the district's Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP), referrals are loaded on iPads and sync to data repositories for analysis.

Because the clinic is certified as a medical home, it is connected to other health care resources in the community such as pediatricians and hospitals. Also, the district understands that dental health is connected to general health and ability to learn; therefore, it participates in programs like "Cavity Free at 3" and "SKIPPY," which provide cleanings and sealants to children and parents.

Through its commitment to its SBHC, the district is demonstrating to students, staff, and families that health and education are priorities—and attention to both makes a measureable difference in the ability of students to learn and the community to thrive.

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

- 4 Ensure schools have a designated faculty member or administrative personnel responsible for coordinating school health and safety programs and activities.

- 4 Collect confidential student and school health indicator data at least once every two years. Consider that data carefully when determining strategic plan objectives and activities.
- 4 Start or get new ideas for how to improve school-based Medicaid and CHP+ outreach to students. The Covering Kids and Families School-Based Enrollment Toolkit includes a step-by-step guide to help schools get started, a frequently asked questions document, a sample memorandum of understanding between a school district and an eligibility site, and contact information for schools already doing this work.
- 4 Consider free and reduced-price meal data to conduct outreach and enrollment services to students who may be eligible but are not enrolled in public health insurance programs.
- 4 Ensure all schools have a school health team that helps plan and implement school health programs with suggested representation from the following stakeholders:
  - School principal
  - Health education teachers
  - Physical education teachers
  - Mental health or social services staff
  - Nutrition or food service staff
  - Health services staff (e.g., school nurse)
  - Maintenance and transportation staff
  - Student body
  - Parents
  - Community
  - Local health departments, agencies or organizations
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Businesses
  - Local government
- 4 Conduct a community readiness assessment to determine the need for physical, mental and dental health services that could be provided through a school-based health center.

### School Board Members

- 4 Develop a board policy that underscores the importance of providing students with access to quality school health services.
- 4 Build awareness among constituents about why quality school health services are relevant to student achievement.
- 4 Help district leaders develop partnerships with community partners to provide additional health services to students.

### Students

- 4 Write letters to experts in the community, including doctors, public health, health systems, etc., and ask them to speak to your school, join your wellness teams and inform your messages, posters, and information given to all students and school staff.

## SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES, continued

- 4 Make resources in health, science or family and consumer sciences classes to display in hallways, such as good health and hygiene practices and techniques.
- 4 Be an example to your peers of proper health actions and healthy behaviors.
- 4 Create a student-led board of health. Give awards to students and staff who are "Caught in the Act" of exemplifying healthy behavior.
- 4 Help ensure that the student body knows the school staff that is responsible for physical, mental and emotional health.
- 4 Work with teachers and other school staff to create wellness days, once per week, involving activities during school and after school.

## Parents

- 4 Advocate for school-based clinics and access to nurses in all schools.
- 4 Build partnerships between schools and community health organizations for additional resources and referrals.
- 4 Teach your child how to stay healthy and the importance of simple, but effective measures like washing hands.

## Community Members

- 4 Become a leader or a supporter of increasing access to school health services in your school district.

- 4 Participate in conversations led by administrators and school board members about how to provide better school health services to students. Help identify community issues, priorities and values.
- 4 Partner with districts and schools to identify and secure access to additional health services in the community.

# RESOURCES

## [Campaign for Educational Equity](#)

View *Healthier Students are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap* to see how high-quality school health initiatives are part of the strategy to close achievement gaps.

## [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

Find research on the link between healthy students and positive academic outcomes.

## [Colorado Association for School-based Health Care](#)

Learn more about what school-based health clinics do, and see the resources page for more links.

## [National Association of School Nurses](#)

Check out this website's policy and advocacy section for information about why school nurses are critical to healthy schools.

## How does your district measure up?



- q Every school in our district provides health services by a licensed school nurse or a trained health services employee who is supervised by a school nurse. We maintain a school nurse-to-student ratio of one nurse per 750 students.
- q Our students are routinely screened and referrals are made for medical needs including vision, hearing, weight and dental problems as well as lack of health insurance.
- q The health status of students with chronic illness (such as diabetes, asthma, allergies and seizures) is monitored routinely, and health care/emergency plans for these students are written by the school nurse and communicated with teachers.
- q Student attendance records are monitored routinely to identify absences related to health concerns.
- q Our schools have adequate health facilities including a sink with hot running water, a handicapped accessible restroom, a cot, a computer, a locked file cabinet and a secure medication cabinet.
- q Our district has considered participating in the Medicaid School Health Services Program, and if we decide to participate, we will strategically spend reimbursed Medicaid dollars on sustaining long term school health efforts. View our webinar, *Untapped Revenue Source – Is Your District Participating?*
- q Our school ensures access to on site school social workers and psychologists who have adequate time in the building to meet the needs of individual students and to deliver school-wide, evidence-based programs that improve safety, social and emotional health and positive behaviors for all students.



# SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH



A comprehensive approach to school social, emotional and mental health includes systemic improvements to school climate and culture and behavioral health supports.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure students feel safe at school.

### Center Consolidated Schools

In the small, rural town in the San Luis Valley, Center Consolidated Schools, where 93% of the approximately 610 students receive free and reduced lunch, students are winning the battle against bullying. The district has collected student level health and risk behavior data for about a decade. They knew teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse rates were high, but wanted the students to be a part of the process and have a voice. Using the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's "Nothing About Us, Without Us" positive youth engagement guide, students became a part of the process and helped to analyze the data. The students themselves noticed increasing rates of bullying, and they decided to take a stand. With funding from the Colorado Legacy Foundation, a monthly collaboration of students, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and county officials collected and analyzed new data, which included parent and student surveys, to pinpoint grade levels and locations where bullying was most prominent.

Armed with information and aimed to prevent bullying incidents versus responding, the district updated its bullying policy to include enumeration language; teachers and staff received on-the-spot intervention training, which will become an annual professional development; and district leaders attended the Bullying Prevention Institute. Over 130 parents attended a bullying prevention seminar hosted by the school district, and most powerfully, students engaged in a social norming campaign. After gathering ideas for logos, slogans, and messages, students created posters and placed them all over the middle and high schools. They



held events such as "Stand for Change Day" and the "Walk Against Bullying" where over 150 kids who pledged not to bully walked with their parents in the community. Students empowered each other to take a stand against bullying, choosing to "Be a buddy, not a bully."

Bullying prevention and intervention curricula will be added to life-skills classes at the high school, and the district works hard to coordinate and collaborate with all other health efforts occurring in the district, including physical activity, mental health and family and community engagement. Center has placed the students' campaign posters and slogans throughout the school building to promote a safe and welcoming environment. In fact, school staff attest to the changes in conversations, saying they often hear the students' slogan and noticing an overall improvement towards a positive school climate..

On the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, students who reported a low commitment to school have steadily decreased from 65% in 2007 to 30% in 2012. On this same survey, students who reported being bullied on school property decreased from 33% in 2007 to 18% in 2012, and students who reported being absent from school due to safety concerns also decreased during the same time period from 12% to

4 percent. Center Consolidated Schools truly stood for change, and the student graduation percentage has increased from 81% in 2009–2010 to 90.3% in 2011–2012.

An 8th grader at Center explained, “The ‘Be a Buddy, Not a Bully’ program has made our school more aware of what bullying is, and it has made kids more aware of the effects of bullying.”

### Rangeview High School

Rangeview High School in Aurora Public Schools understands that students need to feel safe in order to learn and thrive, and that racial or cultural harassment is never acceptable. With approximately 2,200 students at the high school level, and 42% of those on free and reduced lunch, Rangeview High School understood it was experiencing a demographic shift that required the school to shift as well in order to meet the needs of the learners walking through its doors.

A grassroots effort from teachers was part of the change. Teachers and parents alike were trained by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) as a start to combat bullying and increase diversity education. All teachers in the school participated in a “No Place for Hate” training, which was customized for each school in order to increase effectiveness. Staff took their commitment even further, engaging in professional development that focused on strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students with unique cultural and ethnic perspectives. Two “Diversity Days” brought guest speakers about homelessness, poverty, gangs, sexuality biases, and inclusion and started a dialogue about ways the school could address student safety and create environments of optimal learning.

Students were a critical component of the change. “Fire Within” challenged them to be innovative entrepreneurs and to address peer interaction—specifically suicide. A connection was seen between bullying, stress, and suicide. As a result, the students created campaigns to address the connection, including “I Choose to Live. I Choose to Love.” Their efforts were recognized by 9News and the Carson J. Spencer Foundation. The school also conducted a student climate survey to capture measureable data about school climate and safety perceptions.

It all worked. Between 2007 and 2011, the school saw a 15% increase in students feeling safe at school. They saw a decrease of 17% in students being harassed in general, and a decrease of 12% of harassment for racial reasons. Dropout rate dropped from 7% to 4%, and graduation rate increased to 79 percent.

One teacher shared, “Allowing for student voice to be recognized and giving them an adult to channel that voice and need has been really central. Teachers noticed what their students needed. Then the administration put the structure in place to allow change to happen.”

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

#### School Climate and Culture

- 4 Post behavior standards, and share student conduct rules expected of all students. Consistently and fairly enforce such standards. Assess efforts along the way, and reward students for positive, inclusive behavior.
- 4 Integrate school culture standards into the core mission of schools, and review school policies and procedures regularly.
- 4 Promote student activities to build self-esteem and mutual understanding of differences by spotlighting special talents, hobbies and cultures of all students, and help integrate these activities across curricula.
- 4 Hold staff accountable for the use of Colorado’s Emotional and Social Wellness Standards across content areas, and provide school climate and culture professional development opportunities to staff.
- 4 Establish a confidential reporting system that allows children to report victimization and that records the details of bullying incidents. Develop—or adjust—school policies appropriately to address different forms of bullying and harassment.

#### School Behavioral Health Supports

- 4 Generate awareness about the positive effects of school behavioral health services.
- 4 Find a champion who will promote awareness of students’ social, emotional and mental health needs.
- 4 Build trust and collaboration with community mental health providers.
- 4 Create a school and/or district-wide mental health team. Members of the team may include: administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, general school staff and community providers.
- 4 Evaluate current behavioral health services, and create an action plan for the implementation of school behavioral health supports. Continually assess and identify strengths and gaps in current services.
- 4 Help create a common referral system for student behavioral health needs, and encourage the use of referral mechanisms that effectively link students to treatment and intervention services in the school and in the community.

## School Board Members

### School Climate and Culture

- 4 Develop a board policy that directs the district to define and evaluate school climate and culture. Include specific bullying and anti-harassment policies and enumerate based on sexual orientation, gender identity, race and ethnicity.
- 4 Request that the district conducts an annual climate survey in every school to measure students' and staff members' perception of the school environment. Analyze the findings with district leaders.
- 4 Encourage the development of culturally responsive curriculum materials in your school district.

### School Behavioral Health Supports

- 4 Request that school leaders develop district-wide student behavioral health support systems, and support comprehensive social, emotional and mental health services.
- 4 Include health-related goals and long term planning and evaluation for behavioral health supports in board meeting agendas.
- 4 Integrate school behavioral health services in district improvement planning.

## Students

### School Climate and Culture

- 4 Design campaigns to foster awareness about diversity in the school.

- 4 Serve as a member on your school or district's health and wellness team.
- 4 Talk to your school leaders about creating a multiculturalism class for credit and a student-led diversity awareness club.
- 4 Promote and model acceptance and tolerance toward people who are different than you.

### School Behavioral Health Supports

- 4 Help decrease the stigma around mental health by designing a mental health awareness campaign.
- 4 Present to your peers, teachers and school leaders about social, emotional and mental health.
- 4 Encourage healthy behaviors among your peers, and reach out to those who are different than you.

## Parents

### School Climate and Culture

- 4 Ask your child if he or she feels safe and welcome in school, and take complaints of bullying seriously.
- 4 Research shows that often parents are the last to know when their child has bullied or has been bullied; therefore, take proactive steps to preclude bullying incidents.
- 4 Get involved. Spend time in your child's classroom or at recess. Research shows that 67 percent of bullying happens when adults are not present.

## How does your district measure up?



### School Climate and Culture

- q Our school addresses school climate and culture through the implementation of research-based National School Climate Standards and evidence-based Colorado Emotional and Social Wellness Standards (ESW).
- q Our school holds high standards for maintaining safe and healthy schools and understands its role in promoting school climate and culture as part of Colorado's Safe Schools Act.
- q School leaders update policies to include provisions for students protected under civil rights codes. Policies promote the ESW Standards as universal prevention for bullying by equipping all students to effectively manage their emotions and social relationships as part of the Measures to Reduce the Frequency of Bullying in Schools Act.
- q Our school incorporates restorative practices as alternatives to zero tolerance discipline policies as suggested in Colorado's House Bill 12-1345.

### School Behavioral Health Supports

- q There is an integrated and sustainable framework for Colorado's Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) that serves as the foundation for student behavioral health needs.
- q Colorado's Emotional and Social Wellness Standards are embedded in the school culture, and the school integrates these standards as universal supports for student behavioral health.
- q Behavioral Health Practices are embedded in the school's improvement planning process and UIP, and we regularly assess strengths and gaps in our behavioral health services.



## SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH, continued

- 4 Serve on your school's climate and culture committee, and help build a positive and safe learning climate for all children—no matter their sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender or race.

### School Behavioral Health Supports

- 4 Support your child's social and emotional development.
- 4 Advocate for and ensure access to a continuum of school behavioral health supports.
- 4 Serve on school health and wellness committees to ensure an integrated approach to behavioral health supports for all students.
- 4 Participate in community mental health awareness campaigns, and educate yourself, your child and other community members about decreasing the stigma of mental health.

## Community Members

### School Climate and Culture

- 4 Become an active and engaged voice for the development of a positive school climate and culture in your school district, and help increase community involvement in your school.
- 4 Join your local school's safety or school climate committee, and help build bridges between the school and the community to create a strong community-school partnership.
- 4 Affirm your appreciation of differences by becoming an outspoken supporter of diversity and inclusiveness.

### School Behavioral Health Supports

- 4 Raise awareness about the need to reduce the stigma around mental health.
- 4 Become an active and engaged voice for the promotion of behavioral health services.
- 4 Advocate for restorative practices not only within your school but also within your community.



# RESOURCES

### [National School Climate Center](#)

Find research-based resources that help you develop positive and sustainable school climates and cultures.

### [Safe Communities Safe Schools](#)

Visit the University of Colorado at Boulder's website—Safe Communities Safe Schools—to access school climate surveys and tips to improve school climate, policies and practices.

### [The School Climate Challenge](#)

Use this resource to access information about school climate needs and challenges along with recommendations for school leaders, policy makers, teacher educators and teachers.

### [UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools](#)

Use this comprehensive resource to access tools and publications about student behavioral health supports. With this resource, you can find a wealth of academic literature, tools and resources about an integrated approach to student social, emotional and mental health supports.

### [University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health](#)

Find a diverse set of resources ranging from policy briefs to tools that help you implement, develop and improve school behavioral health services and Systems of Care.

### [Colorado School Safety Resource Center](#)

Explore this website offering a wealth of resources for educators to learn more about the Colorado School Safety Resource Center's work with schools and communities to create safe school environments for students. The center offers no-cost consultation and technical assistance to schools.

### [Measuring School Climate: A Toolkit for Districts and Schools](#)

This toolkit from the Colorado Legacy Foundation provides guidelines for measuring school climate, assessing readiness, obtaining parent consent, using multiple sources of data to monitor climate, conducting a focus group, communicating your results, and includes a comparison of common climate surveys.



More than 93,000 people are employed by school districts in Colorado. This sizable work force has a huge influence on the health and learning of students. Healthy employees are more productive employees. They have lower absentee rates and lower health care costs. They also serve as healthy role models for students and even help the school district project a more positive image in the community. Developing an effective employee wellness plan is a great place to start.

## Spotlight on Success

Some districts and schools in Colorado are leading the way to ensure the workplace is healthy.

### Colorado Springs School District 11

According to Dr. Nicholas Gledich, Superintendent, walking the talk in Colorado Springs School District 11 in workplace wellness is resulting in visible strides towards health.

*"I have seen a change in staff attitude, behavior, and conversations. Key leaders that impact students, staff and academics meet to share what they are doing in order to have appropriate alignment of health and wellness efforts throughout the district."*

Just two years ago, the district realized that the cost of employee payment medical plans was becoming a barrier to wellness, so it decided to strategically create workplace wellness opportunities that would reduce health insurance costs and improve employee health. The program incentivizes staff using gift cards and exercise equipment. Its "Sonic Boom" program can be done both inside and outside school, offering a 10 to 15 minute per day physical activity plan that includes yoga and the Flat 14ers walking program. When someone walks a mile, they get 200



"boomer bucks" that are redeemable for \$5.00 cash. Students can also participate in the wellness activities.

A health screening is offered as part of the overall workplace wellness program, and 68% of all benefit eligible employees checked their glucose and blood pressure levels—that's 2,516 individuals who learned more about their biometrics, while providing baseline data to measure change over time. Additionally, 52% did a personal health assessment. A district executive wellness committee of key partners within the district meets monthly to share, identify, and align health and wellness efforts across nutrition, physical education, and health for students, parents and staff.

While still in its early stages, the workplace wellness program is seeing encouraging results and plans to realize measureable ones in the near future. One staff member shares, *"Sonic Boom encouraged me to get healthy. My friends and I encourage each other every day to continue with a healthy lifestyle. I have lost 65 pounds, and believe had it not been for Sonic Boom, I would not be living the healthy life I am now."*

### East Grand School District

Located near Winter Park, the rural East Grand School District in Grand County enrolls 1200 students, 34% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch. For over 10 years, East Grand School District has been passionate about the health and wellness of both their students and their faculty. With an intention to reduce stress levels during high-stress times, the school health nurse and the district health team devised an engaging employee wellness plan. They determined that if they could reduce the stress on teachers, they would see a positive impact on the students' stress-levels, and eventually, the community as a whole.

East Grand came up with an eight week program called Spring Tune-Up. Every year the program has a different theme and kicks-off with a healthy breakfast meeting. Their employee wellness program looks at the total scope of wellness, including the physical, mental, social, and emotional wellness of all staff. They use a point system, whereas participants get points for taking naps, skiing, reading books, getting their annual health check-ups, or attending health fairs. The employees who choose not to be competitive do not track points, but they still participate. Incentives, which are often donated by local community businesses, are provided to winners and range from one-day passes to fitness centers, movie tickets, fit balls, jump ropes, lift tickets, coupons for salads at local food services, and book store gift cards.

In addition to the points program, teachers lead before and after school fitness programs, including yoga and Zumba classes, and participate in monthly wellness campaigns, including "Wash It Down with Water in January," "Moving in March," and "Mile a Day in May." "People have fun doing it. When people's attitudes are healthy and positive, it sets the tone for the whole school day," says Kathy Kopp, East Grand School District's Health and Wellness Coordinator. "It's embedded in our school culture and an expectation to get on board."

Staff participation in the employee wellness program is at 75%. In past years, program participation has included parent-teacher groups, students, custodial, and food service staff. Even the superintendent and district office participates, with upwards of 50% participation at the district level. And what's best, this positive and healthy attitude not only increases staff engagement, job satisfaction, attendance, and possibly even lowers insurance premiums, but school staff are also modeling healthy behaviors and having an impact on the school's students.

Notes Nancy Karas, EGSD Superintendent, "One of the things I am most proud of is the district's unwavering commitment to the health of its students and staff. East Grand has demonstrated this commitment in many ways without hesitation, even during

these past years of significant budget cuts. The district's support is evidenced in part by the high quality physical education programs required at every level from kindergarten to twelfth grade, the ability of staff to access workout rooms and exercise classes on campus, annual funding for full-time nursing staff and a district health coordinator, support of after-the-bell breakfast in all schools, before lunch recess for PreK-8 students as often as possible, and by providing a 100% paid quality health insurance plan to all staff to ensure they are able to care for their health needs. East Grand recognizes that the cost of such programs is high, but an unhealthy student body and staff would cost far more."

## ACTION STEPS

### Administrators

- 4 Conduct an employee wellness needs and interest assessment.
- 4 Create a district-wide action plan that includes opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity and provides incentives for employees to participate.
- 4 Provide resources and technical assistance to schools that want to develop individual school employee wellness programs.
- 4 Provide mental health support for all employees.
- 4 Partner and contact your insurance provider for opportunities and free resources.

### School Board Members

- 4 Develop a board policy that encourages 100% participation by all district employees, classified and non-classified, in workplace wellness programs.
- 4 In the community, promote the connection between employees who practice healthy living, good nutrition and physical activity with quality teaching and better support for students.
- 4 Support workplace wellness programs by modeling a healthy lifestyle.

### Students

- 4 Talk to teachers about what would interest them about staying and/or getting healthy.
- 4 Create physical activity and nutrition challenges. Make it fun!
  - For example, include a healthiest classroom contest where teachers compete, and students are involved. Track and display classroom success in the hallways.
- 4 Encourage teachers to take steps towards being healthy by working with administration to lead school-wide programs.



- 4 Create and promote a healthy classroom environment by advocating for healthy classroom snacks, brief physical activity breaks and health education.
  - Talk to teachers about being able to eat and drink in class and agree on foods and beverages that both teachers and students cannot eat (e.g., soda, chips).
- 4 Form a bond with teachers and show appreciation and concern for teachers' well-being.
  - Provide stress reduction information and incentives during teacher appreciation nights.

## Parents

- 4 Encourage employee wellness by thanking employees for staying (or trying to become more) fit and healthy.
- 4 Support staff by bringing healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables and whole grain items to school events and meetings.
- 4 Invite staff to PTA or PTO meetings to talk about the employee wellness program and challenge parents to follow suit.
- 4 Become a leader or a supporter of health and wellness among employees in your school district.
- 4 Help spread the word in your community about the positive impact healthy and fit employees have on student learning.
- 4 Partner with districts and schools to provide resources to support employee health and wellness.

### How does your district measure up?



- q Our district has a wellness leader and/or a committee devoted to employee wellness issues.
- q We have a district-wide employee wellness program that was informed by an employee wellness needs assessment and is integrated into coordinated school health programs.
- q Our employee wellness program is supported across the district community.
- q Our district provides ample opportunities for stress awareness and healthy eating and physical activity for all staff, certified and non-certified.
- q Our employees model healthy behaviors for our students and take a strong interest in the health and well-being of our students.

## RESOURCES

### [Alliance for a Healthier Generation—Employee Wellness](#)

Learn practical strategies for developing an employee wellness plan and school employee wellness criteria.

### [School Employee Wellness](#)

Visit this website to download *School Employee Wellness: A Guide for Protecting the Assets of Our Nation's Schools*.

This comprehensive guide provides information, practical tools and resources for the development of school employee wellness programs.

### [WELCOA](#)

Find out how to build and sustain results-oriented workplace wellness programs.

### [Kaiser Permanente's Thriving Schools](#)

Thriving Schools promotes workforce health and student-focused interventions such as improving school lunches and increasing opportunities for physical activity. The Thriving Schools website offers ready-to-use tools and resources at no cost, as well as a place to find ideas and success stories from school wellness champions. Everyone is invited to use the site — it's not just for Kaiser Permanente members.



## Dealing with Pushback

Creating a healthy school that serves nutritious meals, teaches children about healthy eating, provides lots of opportunities for physical activity and offers access to health care services doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and dedication, but the long-term investment is huge. When kids are healthy, they excel in school. When employees participate in wellness programs, they are often more productive and take fewer days off.

Taking a coordinated approach to creating a healthy school simply makes good sense. Some may question efforts or priorities. The fact is that for every barrier, there is a solution. And a top priority is keeping kids and staff healthy!

Among the most common issues that arise:

- n Lack of funding. School district budgets are stretched thin, especially during challenging economic times. Fortunately, many of the action steps in this guide are inexpensive and provide a huge return on investment that focuses on a school district's main mission: student achievement.
- n Competing demands. School districts are under more pressure than ever to get results, and with good reason. The focus on improving academics competes for time and money, leaving health and wellness issues behind. A coordinated approach to healthy schools should not compete with academics; instead, it should be viewed as one of the key levers to advance student performance.
  - For example, research shows that school-based asthma programs can improve attendance and grades for students, especially low income urban minority youth who have higher rates of asthma than other students (Basch, 2011). Also consider this: 86% of Colorado voters support requiring 30 minutes of physical education each day in schools—even if it meant time was taken away from other subjects. (Source: 2009 poll commissioned by the Colorado Health Foundation).
- n Low on the priority list. Some may not view health and wellness as part of the school district's mission. The reality, however, is that it's hard for students to concentrate on their studies if they haven't eaten a nutritious meal, can't see the chalkboard, or aren't coming to school because they are afraid of being harassed or not able to manage a chronic disease, such as asthma or diabetes.
- n Believe it. According to a 2009 poll commissioned by the Colorado Health Foundation, 80 percent of Colorado voters believe that as students become more physically fit, their test scores increase and discipline problems decrease. In addition, a growing body of research actually supports this belief. Recent studies have shown that school-based physical activity programs may result in short-term cognitive benefits and improved cognitive functioning among children (Basch, 2011).
- n Inadequate space. Some school and district leaders say they struggle with where to place students—let alone room for a nurse's office, gym or kitchen. Yet schools from Grand Junction to Bethune are using creative approaches and partnering with local recreation departments and parks to build gymnasiums that are large enough to meet everyone's needs or entering into joint-use agreements. Some high schools are now offering high-quality, standards-based online courses in physical education.
- n "Kids won't eat it!" Some may worry that if they swap out popular but less healthy snacks and sugary drinks for fruits, vegetables, trail mix and bottled water, they'll lose revenue. Healthy snacks and sugar-free drinks give students the energy they need for school, sports and after-school activities. And students and staff buy them—especially when those are the only options!
  - Nearly 80% of Colorado voters believe it is "very important" for schools to encourage healthy food choices, according to the Colorado Health Foundation poll. Also, an emerging body of research is documenting the adverse effects of skipping breakfast on various aspects of cognitive performance including alertness, attention, memory, problem solving, and mathematics (Basch, 2011).
- n "I don't matter." It's easy to put ourselves second when our first priority is the students we serve. But research shows that employee wellness programs result in positive outcomes for adults—and, ultimately, students. Healthy school employees are absent from work less often, more productive and likely to have lower health care costs. They also are positive role models for their students.

## MYTH BUSTERS, continued

- n Students are not able to make important decisions regarding their own health and education. Students can and should be involved in making health decisions because giving them opportunities to contribute helps them identify their “sparks,” or interests and passions. Research shows that helping students identify their sparks, appears to be an important component of teaching and learning because it assists students in achieving school success.  
(Source: Search Institute Insights & Evidence, 2010).
  - For example, one study shows that students with supportive teachers or those who felt like they belonged in school had higher GPAs than those who did not (Guttman & Midgley, 2000).
  - Students should be engaged in positive youth-adult partnerships where their voices are heard, and their opinions help inform decisions.
- n Advice for students from students on how to become engaged:
  - Step out of your comfort zone, don’t be afraid to be “uncool” and challenge the status quo to make sustainable and meaningful changes.
- Want change, believe there is something you can do and you will make a difference.
- Make it simple and fun to change.
- Not sure what to do? Start small and join a club that already exists.
- Students are innovative and often think of cost effective solutions.
- Step it up and create your own club:
  - n Be a leader, welcoming and dedicated. Recruit a small group of supporters (“mini army”) from all peers and grade levels, and find a teacher advisor that can help support your efforts.
  - n Make your club or team fun and welcoming. Offer food, trips and resume builders.
  - Set member expectations and ground rules: keep all members engaged.
  - n Be tenacious. Keep at it, and best wishes on your journey to a healthier school.







